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S Shukla

Education for Development in Asia by Jandhyala B G Tilak; Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994; pp 245, Rs 275 (cloth).
Learning from Conflict: Tracts for the Times, by Krishna Kumar, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1996; pp xiv + 81.
Fifth Survey of Research in Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training; Vol I, NCERT, New Delhi, 1997; pp xii + 735, Price unstated.

BEAUTIFUL people do not labour. Conversely, in education, the working teacher or the one who trained to become one seldom succeeds in writing perceptively about the work involved. Half a century after freedom, this is no less true than before, as the books under review illustrate. For, education is like an army where the lowly teacher's lot is to do or die, not to reason why – or even how. But unlike the army, the 'officers' – generals, colonels, etc, here academics or consultants – are not professionally trained 'soldiers' (teachers). They did not intend to teach, in any case not teach school. They are not either participant-observers or even observer-participants generally. These people from literature or the human (including social) and the natural sciences have the leisure, status and skills necessary for observing how those others labour. Nor are they like the blinkered bull (teacher-educator) yoked to teaching or even studying education. They are free to move on to greener pastures and come back and graze again at will. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (1998) has called education *The Contested Terrain* but it would be better described as a fractured discourse or a jinxed study or discipline. Thus this review has been attempted from a somewhat mixed vantage point of the reviewer – an interrupted study of the physical sciences, followed by a spell of work for the revolution, school teaching, training to be one and finally, a university career of graduate study and research and, teaching in that 'dalit' of the academia, education. What follows then is basically a school master's attempted academic look at (i) the work of a trained economist, (ii) of a literary person with keen perceptions of a contemporary world and also the standpoint of the child and, lastly (iii) the collective endeavour of one's own professional peers.

The hopes of Karl Mannheim in the capability of intellectuals to serve as objective critics of society have proved illusory. Recent Indian scholarship in education is a case in point. For example, most contributors to the recent Chitnis-Altbach volume on Higher Education Reform (1993), including the editors, had been forthcoming as contributors in the *Journal of Higher Education* (*JHE*) in 1970s and 1980s on issues related to equality, inequity and kindred matters. The 1993 collection contains only one piece somewhere near this area and that too under the title 'Access' by Karuna Chanana. The establishment or the power structure has more than one way to achieve this kind of silence and the intellectuals are no un-cooperative players. As Sorokia noted more than half a century ago in *Fads and Foibles in Social Sciences* through a practice of mutual citation, older (and other) scholarship is sent out of view, while, co-option and obliteration is the game of the powers-that-be through research grants, publication support, committee formation and the like. The eminent and unbeatable among even the apparently un-cooptable can be used by putting them on committees to (a) correct really foolish ideas, (b) provide legitimacy, and (c) reduce at least some of the sting in their hostility. Educational scholarship of the past decades has conformed to this pattern even more. Thus even the ideas of Gramsci, Gandhi and Dewey can be highlighted, obscuring obstacles emerging from class realities, exploitation, or poverty to the point of hunger.

Tilak's work under review cannot but be viewed against this background. It "examines the growth of and investment in education during the last two or three decades". A later disclaimer about the treatment not being comprehensive or definitive is rather unhelpful, even deceptive. For, while implications can be drawn or even asserted from the material presented and widely cited and propagated with the author's authority and prestige, he would be in a position to deny responsibility if in error. Tilak's present work is amenable to much misuse and misrepresentation in line with a great deal of 'education and development' writing today – and its companion theory of 'lopsided' overdevelopment of higher education in the third world. This theory does not examine either the role of higher learning in building of national capabilities including resistance to first world dominance or the poverty and hunger factor in non-utilisation of elementary education.

One of Tilak's conclusions, for example, is "education improves the productivity of labour force, enhances individual earnings, raises national income, reduces poverty and improves income distribution. The quantitative effect, however, varies from country to country depending upon the level of socio-economic development, the level of development of the educational system...The relationship between education and development is not unidirectional...It is not possible exactly to assert which is the cause and which is the effect" (p 179). While one can be grateful for the mass of data in the 10 chapters that have gone before that, there is little that these conclusions tell us. The data and the tables in the earlier text should have thrown more light on cause and effect in individual countries. The positive conclusions in the first part of the quote are assertions of causality denied in the latter part of it and are, in any case, not borne out by the evidence. We can only infer parallel variation or concurrency. Unhappily for this variety of scholarship – and, indeed, for almost any variety of scholarship – Kerala and Sri Lanka exist and illustrate the coexistence of poverty and poor growth with high levels of schooling, too, unless one uses the latest international devices of counting real incomes, welfare, POLI, etc, which take account of low prices, environmental benefits, etc.

It is difficult to understand either educational or socio-economic development in such mere quantitative terms, unhistorically and, if one may coin a simple (even simplistic) term for the relationships of dominance and exploitation, ungeographically (north-south). Some countries are underdeveloped because some others are developed. This has happened through exploitation and dominance via market, trade or military force and now through gaps in technology which increase exponentially every year. Such too is often the relationship between classes, regions and centre and periphery even within nation-states. The poor do not always progress when the nation 'as a whole' does. Those who cannot eat are not likely to come to school, survive there or learn.

In spite of investment in education children fail to learn or retain what is learnt when they do not have the wherewithal to eat and clothe. This understanding does not arise from nor stand refuted by material presented in the book. The finding in the book that east Asia does much better than south Asia is better understood in terms of politics. These countries, with the exception of South Korea, retained political sovereignty throughout, used their own languages for education, closed their society or even remained authoritarian to the extent it was necessary to protect autonomous development, retained a pattern of social political authority, but shunned the 'luxury' of democracy and freedom for a considerable period and constructed the basis of broad and sustained growth through mass education within this context and framework. Little of such understanding could be derived from Tilak's book, notwithstanding its otherwise valuable data and first level reasoning.

Krishna Kumar's *Tract* leaves one mystified. Others in this series, such as Sumit Sarkar, Gail Omvedt and C T Kurien had a clear political message. But Krishna Kumar is mostly reiterating the message of Rousseau and Dewey, viz, child-centred education. In the first essay 'Presentation of Conflict', for example, not mentioning anti-Sikh riots in the 1980s or the treatment of riots earlier is found unsatisfactory. The choice a teacher has to make between showing the child the whole ugly reality and pushing it under the carpet, and the problem of how much and how soon an adult can face the child with the real world's dilemmas has not occurred to this educationist. For, he has never taught school. Similarly in 'Children and History' (chapter 2), the principle of learning from experience is almost mechanically applied. Local history is a healthy thing. But to ask that ancient history should not be taught at the early age, interferes with the child's sense of sequence and time, raising a question: what comes first? And can all history be taught through experience? Or geography or even family? How can a child *experience* that the earth is round? How can he prove that his mother is actually his mother? The child is told about the wide diversity of India which has over time been built into some kind of a unity. But this will not arise from experience. This has to be held out as the framework in which to view many parts of India at different points in time getting linked and unified, still imperfectly, and making today's India. 'Science as Socialisation' (chapter 3) is a commentary on environmental studies of NCERT, among other interests of the author in this area, showing up the contradictions in the author's own approach. 'Two Worlds' (chapter 4) is a critique by the author and others of the divided schooling system of India, without touching on the structural features of our society.

It was good that from the *Third Survey of Research* (NCERT 1979-83), this work was institutionalised and continues so. The late M B Buch started the First Survey at the Centre of Advanced Study of Education at M S University, Baroda. The Second Survey was a purely extra-departmental voluntary exercise. The first has served as a guide to research scholars for their own work. The psychologist director of NCERT, the late Shib Mitra, broadened the range of disciplines among authors and the editorial board. This practice has been continued in this fifth effort. That is some advance over the pioneer effort of the late J P Naik who, even as he joined the ministry of education as adviser for elementary education in the 1960s, started documenting PhD theses in education.

The present volume continues in the traditions so formed, though after a long gap. It has some distinguished social scientists among authors and on the editorial board but also some of the deficiencies of its predecessors which were sought to be corrected somewhat in the third and fourth surveys. As always, it uses PhD scholars' summaries of their theses as the material on which authors of the surveys write their chapters. This misses out sometimes on more significant findings, both of the theses and elsewhere. One has to recognise, that it would be difficult to get anyone to go into all the material available in the country. But the very range of the material has been narrow this time. And it has been unnecessarily split into many chapters. Thus the distinguished social anthropologist Sachchidananda has had to rely on 31 summaries only (and do without some of the material which has spread out to chapters on scheduled castes, minorities, etc) for his chapter 'Sociology of Education'. Some studies in this chapter have had to be rather too fully summarised and a less than complete view of sociology of education is available. The late B N Mukherji, who did important psychometric work at the Council for Social Development at Delhi and later at Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, has, as member of the editorial board, written the chapter on educational psychology. P R Panchmukhi uses 30 entries for the chapter on economics of education and Gulistan Kerawalla only 16 for comparative education. In the latter case, more material is available in other chapters although, as she indicates, the interest in this important area is not very widespread, the decadal numbers of theses being 1941-76 nil, 1971-80 36, 1981-90 74 and 1991-92 4, all rather loosely comparative.

The chapter on women's studies is, understandably, a recent entry. Usha Nayar's work here does give a view of some of the pedagogical work on women's education but misses out entirely on the feminist flavour of much other work in recent years. All of this when well known sociologists such as Karuna Chanana and Suma Chitnis figure on the editorial board. The inadequacy arising from relying on doctoral theses, largely from education departments only (though there are some from other fields), is illustrated here vividly by there being no mention of, for instance, the educational insights in Malavika Karlekar's *Voices from Within* (1991). Krishna Kumar's *What Is Worth Teaching?* is similarly not mentioned in the chapter on curriculum studies.

The *Survey* continues to bear its birthmarks and, in addition, has overdivided the fields into 40-odd area chapters which will guide the beginner research scholar into even more narrow visions of his work. The ready availability of the *Surveys*, while certainly introducing him/her to the subject, tends to limit the view. Contrast this with the earlier work on sociology of education by Suma Chitnis for the *First Research Survey of Sociology* organised by the Indian Council of Social Science Research or *Research on Scheduled Castes* by Nirmal Malhotra and Banu Rizvi. One wonders whether individuals or institutions are better for such tasks.

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